

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

AID-05 /062 W

----- 045299

P R 270710Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2329

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 0490

NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT MY

SUBJ: STATE ELECTIONS IN SABAH BEFORE APRIL 21

REF: 75 KUALA LUMPUR 7229 (NOTAL), 75 KUALA LUMPUR 7131 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: SABAH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WAS DISSOLVED JAN 23 WITH ELECTIONS FOR 48 STATE ASSEMBLY SEATS TO BE HELD WITHIN NINETY DAYS. DISSOLUTION WAS FORCED BY THE RULING UNITED SABAH NATIONAL ORGANIZATION (USNO) OF TUN MUSTAPHA WHO WAS ACCUSED BY OPPOSITION LEADER TUN MOHAMED FUAD OF SEEKING TO CAPITALIZE ON THE CONFUSION IN KUALA LUMPUR FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF TUN RAZAK.

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FUAD'S BERJAYA PARTY WILL PUT UP CANDIDATES FOR

ALL SEATS AND PEKEMAS ALSO WILL ENTER SOME CONTESTS. AT THIS WRITING, IT SEEMS THAT USNO WILL WIN A SOLID MAJORITY UNLESS THERE IS HEAVY INTERVENTION ON BERJAYA'S BEHALF BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. A SPECIAL MEETING OF 600 DELEGATES FROM TUN DATO HAJI MUSTAPHA'S UNITED SABAH NATIONAL ORGANIZATION VOTED JAN 21 TO URGE STATE-WIDE ELECTIONS FOR THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. AT THE MEETING, TUN MUSTAPHA TOLD DELEGATES, WHO GAVE HIM AND THE USNO SUPREME COUNCIL FULL POWERS TO CHOOSE CANDIDATES, THAT THE TIME HAD COME TO ASCERTAIN THE "TRUE SITUATION" IN SABAH. HE ACCUSED "CERTAIN POLITICAL OPPORTUNISTS" OF AFFECTING THE POLITICAL STABILITY AND UNITY CREATED BY USNO OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS." MUSTAPHA ALSO EULOGIZED THE LATE PRIME MINISTER TUN RAZAK AND ANNOUNCED THAT THE SABAH GOVT WOULD BUILD A MEMORIAL TO HIM.

3. THE USNO-CONTROLLED ASSEMBLY (ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE SABAH ALLIANCE -- USNO, THE SABAH CHINESE ASSOCIATION AND THE SABAH INDIAN CONGRESS -- HELD THIRTY-TWO SEATS. THERE WERE SIX NOMINATED ASSEMBLYMEN AND ONLY THREE BERJAYA OPPOSITIONISTS) DULY DISSOLVED ITSELF JAN 23 AND ON JAN 25 THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL ELECTION COMMISSION ANNOUNCED THAT DATES WOULD BE SET FOR THE ELECTIONS AT THE COMMISSION'S MEETING IN MID-FEBRUARY. (A DATE WILL ALSO BE FIXED FOR A BY-ELECTION IN PEKAN, PAHANG, TO FILL TUN RAZAK'S VACANT PARLIAMENTARY SEAT.) POLLING WILL BE STAGGERED BECAUSE OF DIFFICULT COMMUNICATIONS IN SABAH'S INTERIOR AND WILL TAKE PLACE BY APRIL 21, OR WITHIN 90 DAYS OF DISSOLUTION, AS PROVIDED IN THE CONSTITUTION. ELECTIONS WILL INVOLVE FORTY-EIGHT CONSTITUENCIES BASED ON A RE-DISTRICTING CONDUCTED BEFORE THE AUGUST 1974 GENERAL ELECTIONS. (ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WERE NOT HELD IN SABAH IN 1974 AND ONLY ONE OF SIXTEEN PARLIAMENTARY SEATS WAS CONTESTED, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE REST FALLING TO THE SABAH ALLIANCE BY DEFAULT.)

4. IN COMMENTING ON THE USNO ACTION, BERJAYA PRESIDENT TUN HAJI MOHAMED FUAD (NEE DONALD STEPHENS) TOLD THE PRESS THAT A PARTY SUPREME COUNCIL MEETING WOULD BE HELD JAN 27 TO DEVELOP STRATEGY FOR THE COMING ELECTIONS IN WHICH, HE SAID, THE PARTY WOULD CONTEST ALL 48 SEATS. FUAD ACCUSED MUSTAPHA

OF CAPITALIZING ON THE CHANGE OF GOVT IN KUALA LUMPUR AND, ALTHOUGH NOMINALLY WELCOMING THE ELECTIONS, EXPRESSED DOUBTS WHETHER THEY WOULD BE FAIR OR DEMOCRATIC BECAUSE ALL NEWLY-APPOINTED DISTRICT OFFICERS ARE MUSTAPHA'S MEN (D.O.'S ACT AS RETURNING OFFICERS AT ELECTIONS). (FUAD HAD EARLIER BLAMED BERJAYA'S FAILURE IN THE LABUAN AND KUALA KINABATANGAN ELECTIONS DEC 8-10 ON THREATS AND ROUGH STUFF BY USNO SUPPORTERS.) HE CALLED ON THE ELECTION COMMISSION TO ENSURE A FAIR CONTEST.

5. MOHAMED FUAD SAID THAT HE IS LIKELY TO CONTEST THE KIULU CONSTITUENCY NEAR KOTA KINABALU. IT IS NOT KNOWN WHETHER MUSTAPHA WILL CONTEST A SEAT SINCE HE DOES NOT NEED TO, HAVING BEEN RE-ELECTED MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FROM KUDAT IN AUGUST 1974. (MUSTAPHA RARELY IF EVER APPEARS IN THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT FROM WHICH HE HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN GRANTED A BLANKET LEAVE.)

6. PEKEMAS (SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY) PRESIDENT DR. TAN CHEE KOON ALSO HAS ANNOUNCED HIS PARTY WOULD CONTEST SOME SEATS AND A MEETING WILL BE HELD IN SABAH SOON TO DETERMINE THE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES TO BE PUT UP. PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL ZAINNUDDIN KARIM CLAIMED THAT PEKEMAS WAS NOT DISCOURAGED BY ITS POOR SHOWING AT LABUAN AND KUALA KINABATANGAN WHERE IT POLLED SO BADLY IT LOST ITS DEPOSITS.

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

AID-05 /062 W

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P R 270710Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2330

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 0490

NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. COMMENT: MUSTAPHA AND HIS USNO SUPPORTERS
HAVE BEEN CAMPAIGNING FURIOUSLY SINCE HIS
RESIGNATION AS CHIEF MINISTER ON OCT 31 AND
HIS REPLACEMENT BY TAN SRI HAJI MOHAMED SAID
KERUAK. TUN MUSTAPHA, SAID KERUAK, AND HIS
MINISTERS HAVE BEEN IN CONSTANT MOTION THROUGHOUT
SABAH PROMISING BRIDGES AND NEW SCHOOLS, SEEING
TO IT ROADS ARE REPAIRED, KISSING BABIES AND
SHOWING A SUDDEN NEW TOLERANCE FOR CHRISTIANITY,
ALL OF WHICH THE CYNICAL ATTRIBUTE TO FEDERAL GOVT
BACKONG OF BERJAYA LAST SUMMER, INCLUDING REPLACE-
MENT OF THE MUSTAPHA-CONTROLLED HEADS OF THE ARMY
AND POLICE THEREBY NEUTRALIZING HIS VIRTUAL DICTATORSHIP
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OVER THE STATE. (MUSTAPHA, AMONG OTHER THINGS,
RAN HIS OWN SECRET POLICE IN ADDITION TO CONTROLLING
THE NATIONAL POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH IN SABAH.) THE
FEDERALLY INSPIRED FRESH WIND WHICH BLEW THROUGH
SABAH RESULTING IN TOLERANCE OF OPEN ELECTIONS AND
DISSENT DID NOT, HOWEVER, ELIMINATE MUSTAPHA'S
WEALTH, POWER, OR SHREWDNESS. NEITHER DID IT MAKE
THE OLD POLS OF BERJAYA'S SENIOR LEADERSHIP
DISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE GRAFTING WARD-HEELERS
OF MUSTAPHA'S CAMP.

8. AN INTENSE CAMPAIGN OF VILIFICATION HAS BEEN
CONDUCTED BY BOTH SIDES IN THE KOTA KINABALU PRESS
INCLUDING REVELATIONS THAT FUAD, FEDERAL TRANSPORT
MINISTER GHANI GILONG AND THEIR ASSOCIATES
HAVE FOR YEARS DEPENDED UPON MUSTAPHA TO BUILD
UP THEIR PERSONAL FORTUNES, TARRING THEM WITH
THE SAME BRUSH THEY SOUGHT TO USE ON USNO.
MEANWHILE, MUSTAPHA HAS RENOUNCED ANY INTENTION

OF SEPARATING SABAH FROM MALAYSIA AND HAS PUBLICLY BACKED ALL MAJOR THEMES PUT FORWARD BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. SINCE IT WOULD NOT BE USEFUL TO CAMPAIGN IN SABAH ON THE ISSUE THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN RUNNING AT A DEFICIT DUE TO THE WHOLESALE PILLAGING OF NATURAL RESOURCES BY THE RICH CHINESE MERCHANTS AND THEIR WEALTHY POLITICAL ASSOCIATES, AND THEREFORE SHOULD TIGHTEN ITS BELT AND REFRAIN FROM BEGGING FOR FEDERAL AID, THERE SEEMS LITTLE THAT BERJAYA CAN DO TO ESTABLISH A SEPARATE IMAGE. MALAYSIAN AND PARTICULARLY BORNEAN VOTERS ARE NOT VERY SOPHISTICATED OR DEMOCRATICALLY INCLINED AND THEIR VOTE GOES WHERE THE MONEY AND THE POWER ARE HELD. IN THIS CASE TO USNO AND MUSTAPHA.

9. BERJAYA'S FATE, THEREFORE, DEPENDS ON THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. IF STRONG SUPPORT IS FORTHCOMING FROM KUALA LUMPUR, INCLUDING A HEALTHY CAMPAIGN BANK-ROLL, THEN THE OPPOSITION MIGHT INCREASE ITS ASSEMBLY SEATS BUT IT SEEMS INCONCEIVABLE UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS THAT IT COULD GET A MAJORITY

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AND ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT. THE NEW PRIME MINISTER IS NOT BEHOLDEN TO MUSTAPHA FOR FAVORS AS WAS TUN RAZAK. FURTHERMORE, HE PROBABLY FINDS MUSTAPHA'S CORRUPT WHEELING AND DEALING REPELLENT. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT HE WILL CHOOSE TO COMPLETELY TOPPLE MUSTAPHA, AS HE MIGHT DO BY DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY IN SABAH AND INSTALLING A STATE OPERATIONS COUNCIL OF HIS OWN MEN. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE SEEMS FLUID, GHANI GILONG REMAINS IN THE NATIONAL CABINET AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SABAH ALLIANCE DESPITE HIS SHIFT TO BERJAYA AND NEITHER SABAH PARTY HAS BEEN FORMALLY ADMITTED TO THE NATIONAL FRONT RULING COALITION. (AGRICULTURE MINISTER AND NATIONAL FRONT SECRETARY GENERAL GHAFAR BABA PLAYED A KEY ROLE AGAINST MUSTAPHA LAST SUMMER.) IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT MUSTAPHA CONTINUES TO USE HIS VAST WEALTH TO UNDERCUT THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP BY HELPING NOT ONLY THE OLD GUARD, SUCH AS TENGKU ABDUL RAHMAN AND KHIR JOHARI, BUT ALSO BY SUPPORTING MANY UMNO DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONS. THEREFORE, REASONS EXIST FOR DATUK HUSSEIN TO SPARE SOME ATTENTION FROM CONSOLIDATING HIS HOLD IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA TO SEEKING TO WEAKEN MUSTAPHA. IT IS MORE PROBABLE, HOWEVER, THAT A DE FACTO COMPROMISE WILL BE

REACHED WITH MUSTAPHA STILL VERY MUCH IN CONTROL
BUT WITH SOME OPPOSITION VOICES IN THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY AND AN IMPLIED GUARANTEE BY THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT THAT IT WILL USE ITS CONTROL OVER
POLICE AND ARMY TO ENSURE THAT THE BAD OLD DAYS
WILL NOT RETURN.
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